DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 043 607 TE 001 983

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TITLE English and the Mass Media.
PUB DATE 69
NOTE 7p.
JOURNAL CIT Use of English; v21 n1 p13-19 Autumn 1969

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.45
DESCRIPTORS *Content Analysis, Cultural Images, English Instruction, Film Study, Instructional Materials, *Mass Media, Music, Newspapers, *Reading Material Selection, Secondary Education, Television Curriculum, *Textbook Evaluation

ABSTRACT

Despite an excess of materials available today on classroom approaches to the mass media, few English teachers have either the training or experience to determine which studies are relevant and worthwhile or how to utilize them in the classroom. A survey of some of this literature, therefore, can help interested teachers make selections appropriate to their needs. In film study, significant both as a medium of mass entertainment and as a major art form, a number of pamphlets, articles, and textbooks contain detailed discussion of aims and methods of film study and lists of films. While only one textbook is currently available on popular music, several essays and articles represent a variety of current points of view on the importance of pop music in the classroom, included as a means of training students in more sophisticated discrimination. Some of the current materials on television, advertising, the press, comics, and popular fiction both demonstrate the close connection between mass media and the teaching of literature and set mass media in its proper social context and in the lives of today's students. (Included are a checklist and an analysis of current essays, journal articles, textbooks, and books, largely British, on various aspects of the mass media.) (DD)

The Use of English,
Vol. 21. No. 1,
Autumn 1969

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ENGLISH AND THE MASS MEDIA

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WORK ON the mass media has a place in English teaching: that much is widely, if not universally, agreed. Many teachers find themselves in a position where they feel they would like to extend the range of their subject in this direction, but are uncertain how to proceed. In many cases, despite the clear recommendations of the *Newsom Report*, they will face opposition from senior colleagues. They will be aware of inadequate facilities, and of an already overcrowded curriculum. They will have very little spare time in which to think and prepare, and they may be worried by their own lack of familiarity with the relevant material—mass media studies have advanced rapidly in the last ten years or so, but there has been little attempt by universities or colleges of education to offer future teachers any training outside the traditional disciplines. Furthermore, until very recently, there was an almost total lack of books to which the teacher could turn, either for his own guidance, or for use as basic texts in the classroom.

These are all major problems, as serious today as they ever were. Only the last has changed, and the change has been extraordinarily rapid: suddenly there is a plethora of books, articles and monographs, addressed specifically to teachers, all dealing with aspects of classroom work on the mass media. I have before me a list of about one hundred items, and the task of collecting and reading through them has been enormously time-consuming—so time-consuming, in fact, that very few teachers would find it possible to familiarise themselves with the whole range, even if they wanted to. The problem is no longer that of a lack of material, but of knowing where to start. Which, among all these publications, are most worth reading and purchasing for the library, and which are good enough to justify the expense of obtaining class sets? The purpose of the present article is to survey as much of this literature as possible—given the limitations of space—in the hope that interested teachers will thereby find it easier to make the selection appropriate to their particular needs.

The whole question of teaching film stands apart from other work on the

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mass media. The essential difference is that film is now recognised not only as a medium of mass entertainment, but also as a major contemporary art form. Under a heading like 'film appreciation', it is therefore relatively easy to justify the introduction of such work into the classroom, and much film teaching is in fact based on assumptions similar to those applied in the teaching of literature—i.e. to offer children some experience of significant works of art which might not come their way outside the school. It has also been argued that great films, because of their vividness and immediacy, are 'available' to a majority of children in a way many great books are not. But film is also a medium of mass entertainment, and the arguments for teaching the other mass media apply here as well—training in discrimination, helping children to recognise cheap or inferior productions, and yet showing them that the best of the popular arts deserve to be treated with respect.

Film teaching is of course difficult, time-consuming, and expensive, but in this field at least the teacher will find a great deal of readily available assistance. The British Film Institute is a unique and invaluable organisation, and the Society for Education in Film and Television, especially through its publications *Screen Education* and the *Screen Education Yearbooks*, can provide practical help and advice. The most useful starting points here are five relatively cheap pamphlets: *Teaching About the Film*, by J. M. L. Peters; *Screen Education*, by A. W. Hodgkinson (both published by UNESCO); *Film and Television in Education for Teaching*; *Film Teaching*, edited by Paddy Whannel and Peter Harcourt; and *Talking About the Cinema*, by J. Kitses (all published by the British Film Institute). These works contain detailed discussions of aims and methods, lists of films and extracts that have been found to work successfully in the classroom, as well as practical examples of specimen courses, book lists, and advice on obtaining films. In 'Two Hours a Week' (*Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1962) Norman Fruchter discusses ways and means of fitting work on film into a crowded timetable, and in two recent articles in *English in Education* (Summer 1968) Charles Barr and Roy Knight put forward some useful ideas. The chapters on film teaching in general books on the mass media tend to be disappointing, but those in *Discrimination and Popular Culture*, edited by Denys Thompson, *Understanding the Mass Media*, by Nicholas Tucker and *Mass Media in the Classroom*, by Brian Firth, are worth consulting. The discussion of popular films in Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel's *The Popular Arts* explores the possibilities for establishing standards of discrimination among representative British and American box-office successes: their analysis of the Western is one of the most original parts of this deservedly well known book, while the commentary on *Butterfield* 8 (pp. 215–18) stands as an excellent example of how the pre-

tensions and failures of a bad film may be effectively but unhysterically brought into the open.

Popular music raises a different set of problems, not least the controversy that any suggestion that it might be introduced into the classroom is bound to provoke. Yet Mr. Tucker's justification for including a section on it in his book has a good deal of force: 'Teenagers spend so much time with pop music that ignorance about it on the teacher's part will also mean that he does not really know his pupils, who use this form of music as a form of self-expression.' A similar case, argued in rather more detail, was put forward by the compilers of the *Newsom Report* (para. 416), who stressed the need to 'bridge the gap between . . . popular enthusiasms and the much more varied and demanding forms of music to which . . . the school should be introducing the pupils'. These writers have tried to work out a position between the extremes of passive classroom indulgence in pop for its own sake (to which Richard Maybey's recent Penguin, *Connexions: Behind the Scene*, comes unfortunately close), and the doomsday prophecies of David Holbrook, who has claimed that all pop is 'dehumanising': 'What is the effect, all told? We need look no further than the rising figures of illegitimacy which are a measure of the way 'pop' has reduced the value we set on ourselves and things human' ('Predatory Beatles', *The Use of English*, Spring 1969).

I do not intend, by that comment, to be unfair to Mr. Maybey. The *Connexions* series, of which he is general editor, is a promising experiment in the textbook field, and his own volume, which is concerned with teenage music and culture, has much to recommend it. I do think, however, that his 'cool look at the pop scene' is too cool altogether, and that he has failed to make the essential educational distinction between classroom 'activities' which merely pass the time, and those which lead children to think for themselves or help them to see things from points of view other than their own. Mr. Holbrook's approach to education and the mass media is well known enough to require no further summary here, but interested readers might consult two earlier articles in *The Use of English*, both of which relate in part to popular music: 'Quite Useful Neutrals' (Spring 1966), and 'Folksong and the Culture of Hate' (Summer 1966). In the same journal are to be found further commentaries on the Beatles by James Reeves (Spring 1968), and D. F. Chorley and G. C. Nicholls (Autumn 1968).

Behind the Scene is the only available textbook on popular music, but there are some excellent essays addressed to the teacher. David Hughes' chapter on 'Recorded Music' in *Discrimination and Popular Culture* places modern pop in its wider musical context, as do Hall and Whannel in *The Popular Arts*. Like the compilers of the *Newsom Report*, they recommend moving out from the music to studies of the industry and the audience, especially the 'teenage

consumer'. By far the best book in this field, however, is Keith Swanwick's *Popular Music and the Teacher*. Mr. Swanwick, in fact, has made an important contribution to our understanding of popular culture in general: his chapters relating modern pop to jazz and folk music are as good as anything on the subject, and when he moves on to discuss the social and cultural implications of musical developments he is able to do so with tact and intelligence. His detailed chapter on 'Popular Music in the Classroom' is based on the practical experience of what sounds like highly successful teaching, and is full of useful suggestions. There is also a broadly-based bibliography and a list of records and song books.

The general books on the mass media come into their own for work on television, advertising, and the press. Raymond Williams' *Communications* is indispensible, and the volumes by Firth, Tucker, and Hall and Whannel stand in that order of length, expense, and complexity.

Otherwise, the best English writer on television in the classroom is A. P. Higgins. His *Talking About Television* and 'Education in Television' (Appendix to Hodgkinson, *Screen Education*) are both practically and theoretically useful. Two American publications which place particular stress on the artistic potential of television are *Television and the Teaching of English*, by Neil Postman, and *TV as Art*, edited by Patrick D. Hazard. Mr. Postman's book has a long section on 'The Classroom Study of Television', which is extremely practical, although rather obvious. Michael Marland's '*Z Cars* and the Teacher' (*Use of English*, Spring 1967), outlines an approach which could be adapted for work on current television programmes.

In comparison with film, popular music, and television, classroom work on the press presents relatively few problems. It is, however, less immediately relevant to the lives of most pupils. All the general books can be recommended, and Graham Martin has contributed an excellent chapter to *Discrimination and Popular Culture*. Michael Marland's *Following the News* is an outstanding textbook. Work on advertising is more problematical, but again the general books are the most helpful. Chatto's folder of pamphlets. *Looking at Advertising*, is cheap and useful for practical studies.

Good work on comics, magazines, and popular fiction is hard to come by, and the best of what there is will again be found in the general books. Hall and Whannel have chapters on crime and romance fiction, and Tucker and Firth both survey the main types of English magazines, though in rather dull ways. Perhaps deservedly, there is little on comic books—though given their popularity among children, there ought to be—and even less on comic strips.

The last few years have seen the sudden appearance of a large number of school textbooks on the mass media, some of which would be suitable for

groups at widely different age and ability levels. Here a distinction has to be drawn between books published in series, and those which attempt to cover all the media in a single volume.

There are now two very similar series which appear to be competing for exactly the same market. Both contain four volumes: E. W. Hildick's 'Close Look' series (*A Close Look at Newspapers*; *Magazines and Comics*; *Television and Sound Broadcasting*; *Advertising*), and R. B. Heath's 'Mass Media' series (*Newspapers*; *Popular Reading*; *Television and Radio*; *Advertising*). All are priced at less than ten shillings. Mr. Heath's series seems to me clearly the better, but the more difficult choice is between these four-volume series and the single-volume compendiums discussed below. To work through all Mr. Heath's books, for example, would presumably take several years, and a further problem arises because both writers have chosen to treat all the various media in exactly the same way. Yet to select any one of the books would seem to lead to absurd specialization. Worse still, I am not convinced that either Mr. Heath or Mr. Hildick has made the best use of the space available: there is a kind of thinness about all eight books which sometimes contrasts unfavourably with single chapters in more general works. In other words, I think the series format might have been a mistake, and the ridiculous amount of duplication here indicates that at least one of these publishers is going to be stuck with a white elephant.

There are three general textbooks available. *Living With the Mass Media*, by Ronald G. Cave and Raymond O'Malley, is a 'discussion' book intended 'to get you [pupils] thinking, and to put you on your guard', but it is extremely generalized, and, as it is addressed to younger children, the lack of illustrative material seems a major disadvantage. Roger Manvell's *This Age of Communication* is comprehensive and detailed, and strikes a useful balance between 'facts' and 'problems'. By far the best of these books, however, is Alan Hancock's *Mass Communication*. At fifteen shillings this is a remarkable and attractive production in which, for once, the intelligently planned questions and exercises add to the book's content through the use of well selected quotations from other, more advanced studies. Moreover, Mr. Hancock insists that this kind of classroom work has no point unless it is socially relevant, and his section on 'Society and Mass Communication' (which includes some comments on mass communication in developing countries) shows that it is possible to present children with complex problems in ways which are genuinely thought-provoking, and yet not grossly over-simplified. It is difficult at the moment to imagine a better book than this one, or one which more conclusively demonstrates the educational potential of mass media studies.

One important though already well known textbook remains to be

mentioned: *Reflections*, by Clements, Dixon, and Stratta. Their section on the mass media is specially designed for less able pupils, and the book as a whole suggests one way in which work on the media may be incorporated directly into English teaching. These authors include the media as one of several relevant social 'themes', which are taken as worthy of consideration in their own right. The main purpose, however, is to provide opportunities for self-expression, both in writing and discussion. This 'thematic' approach seems to me important, partly because it avoids separating the mass media from their social context and from the lives of the pupils, but more because it maintains close connections with the teaching of literature. Further suggestions for work along these lines—on themes such as 'violence in society', 'family life', 'work and leisure'—are to be found in *Talking About Television* and *The Popular Arts*.

CHECKLIST OF BOOKS AND ARTICLES

General Studies of the Mass Media

Firth, Brian, *Mass Media in the Classroom* (Macmillan, cloth 25*s*; paper 11*s*)
Hall, Stuart and Whannel, Paddy, *The Popular Arts* (Hutchinson, 45*s*)
Thompson, Denys (ed.), *Discrimination and Popular Culture* (Penguin, 4*s*)
Tucker, Nicholas, *Understanding the Mass Media: A Practical Approach for Teaching* (C.U.P., 30*s*)
Williams, Raymond, *Communications* (revised edition, Chatto and Windus, 30*s*; Penguin, 4*s* 6*d*)

Textbooks

Cave, Ronald G. and O'Malley, Raymond, *Living With the Mass Media* (Ward Lock, 12*s* 6*d*)
Clements, Simon, Dixon, John and Stratta, Leslie, *Reflections: An English Course for Students Aged* 14–18 (O.U.P., 7*s* 6*d*)
Hancock, Alan, *Mass Communication* (Longmans, 15*s*)
Heath, R. B., Series: *The Mass Media* (Hamish Hamilton, originally published by Bodley Head, 9*s* 6*d*)
1. *Newspapers*
2. *Popular Reading*
3. *Advertising*
4. *Television and Radio*

Hildick, E. W., Series (Faber, 7*s* to 10*s*)
A Close Look at Newspapers
A Close Look at Magazines and Comics
A Close Look at Television and Sound Broadcasting
A Close Look at Advertising

Manvell, Roger, *This Age of Communication* (Blackie, 15*s*)
Marland, Michael, *Following the News: A Course in the Effective Reading of Newspapers* (Chatto and Windus, 15*s*)
Marland, Michael (ed.), *Looking at Advertising* (folder of eight pamphlets, Chatto and Windus, 5*s* 6*d*)
Maybey, Richard, *Connexions: Behind the Scene* (Penguin, 5*s*)

Special Topics

Barr, Charles, 'Film and Literature', *English in Education* (Summer 1968)
Fruchter, Norman, 'Two Hours a Week', *Sight and Sound* (Autumn 1962)
Hazard, Patrick D. (ed.), *TV as Art: Some Essays in Criticism* (National Council of Teachers of English, 15*s*)
Higgins, A. P., *Talking About Television* (British Film Institute, 8*s* 6*d*)
Higgins, A. P., 'Education in Television' (Appendix to Hodgkinson, below)
Hodgkinson, A. W., *Screen Education: Teaching a Critical Approach to Cinema and Television* (Reports and Papers on Mass Communication, No. 42, UNESCO, 5*s*)
Kitses, J., *Talking About the Cinema* (British Film Institute, 8*s* 6*d*)
Knight, Roy, 'Film as Language', *English in Education* (Summer 1968)
Marland, Michael, '*Z Cars* and the Teacher', *The Use of English* (Spring 1967)
Postman, Neil, *Television and the Teaching of English* (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 12*s* 6*d*)
Swanwick, Keith, *Popular Music and the Teacher* (Pergamon, 15*s*)
Whannel, Paddy and Harcourt, Peter (eds.), *Film Teaching* (British Film Institute, 7*s* 6*d*)
Film and Television in Education for Teaching (British Film Institute, 2*s* 6*d*)

EDITORIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Readers and contributors may like to know that the reviewing side of the magazine is now being handled by the Assistant Editor, Christopher Parry. Nevertheless, all communications, including articles, reviews and review copies, should be sent in the first instance to The Editor, *The Use of English*, 40 William IV St., W.C.2.